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the birds make everything okay

Marybeth Holleman



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the birds make everything okay

November 13, Anchorage

it is freezing rain and it is dark
and there should be snow but no
it's not cold enough and the bears
are still awake and roaming our
neighbourhood looking for food the
salmon and berries all gone and
the snowshoe hares have turned
white are bright against the brown
of climate change's new order and
I have just read how many are gone
a quarter of them winged away from
us in just my lifetime disappeared.
but there are nuthatches at the suet
and one slips its beak into the ridges
of the gnarled willow, and there is
a steller's jay winging in low from
spruce to snatch one last peanut,
and earlier I saw, scrabbling for grit
at the edge of a half-frozen puddle,
a downy woodpecker, bright red
crown nodding, yes, and it did not
fly off at my approach. it did not leave.

Raised in North Carolina's Smokies, **MARYBETH HOLLEMAN** moved to Alaska's Chugach Mountains after falling head over heels for Prince William Sound just two years before the EVOS oil spill. She's author of *The Heart of the Sound* and *Among Wolves*, and co-editor of *Crosscurrents North*, among others. Her first poetry collection, *tender gravity*, is forthcoming from Red Hen Press. Her prose and poetry focus on encounters and communications for/with/among species and place. Her website is www.marybethholleman.com.